

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

IO-13 /081 W

-----082821 120432Z /64

R 111409Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8843

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 2650

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORC, AR, BL, PE, CI

SUBJ: CHILE'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS

REFS: (A) BUENOS AIRES 2631 (B) SANTIAGO 2566

1. SUMMARY: DURING A TOUR D'HORIZON WITH EMBOFF, A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL: PREDICTED STORMY WEATHER FOR PHASE TWO OF THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE; SAID CHILE EXPECTS BOLIVIA TO TAKE ITS CORRIDOR CASE TO THE INTERNATIONAL FORA; AND CHARACTERIZED A RECENT MEETING OF PERUVIAN AND CHILEAN GENERALS AS LONG ON EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP, BUT SHORT ON POLITICAL SUBSTANCE. THE GOC HAS ANNOUNCED ANOTHER HIGH-LEVEL MILITARY VISIT TO PERU. END SUMMARY.

2. A FOREIGN MINISTRY POLICY PLANNING OFFICER TOLD EMBOFF APRIL 5 THAT CHILE'S RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA AND PERU ARE RECEIVING INCREASING GOC ATTENTION. SUMMARIZING GOC ASSESSMENT OF RELATIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS, THE OFFICER STATED THAT:

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-- THE GOC CONVINCED ARGENTINA TO SHELVE THE ISSUES OF CHILEAN OCCUPATION OF THE ISLANDS SOUTH OF THE BEAGLE AND THE STRAIGHT BASE LINES UNTIL PHASE TWO OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE GOA RELUCTANTLY AGREED, HE SAID, MAINTAINING A HARDENED VIEW OF THE BEAGLE QUESTION WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO A COLLAPSE OF THE TALKS. THE OFFICIAL ASSERTED THAT WHEN THAT HAPPENS, CHILE WILL TAKE HER CASE

TO THE HAGUE, WHICH THE 1972 SETTLEMENT OF CONTROVERSIES TREATY WITH ARGENTINA ALLOWS. (COMMENT: THE OFFICIAL THUS SUGGESTS THAT PHASE ONE OF THE CURRENT TALKS WHICH ENDED APRIL 6 CONTRIBUTED LITTLE TO ANY EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE, A VIEW APPARENTLY SHARED IN BUENOS AIRES-REFTEL A).

-- THE HOSTILE BOLIVIAN PRESS AND BANZER'S SPEECHES REFLECT THE CONFUSING, COMPLEX INTERNAL BOLIVIAN POLITICAL SITUATION. CHILE EXPECTS BOLIVIA, AS A CURRENT MEMBER OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, TO DRAMATIZE ITS CORRIDOR CASE BEFORE INTERNATIONAL FORA. CHILE IS ALREADY PREPARING ITS OWN COUNTERATTACK, WITH FORMER GOC AMBASSADOR TO LA PAZ PEDRO DAZA WORKING ON THE POSITION PAPERS. THE FONMIN OFFICIAL THEN CONFIDED THAT CHILE WOULD BE APPROACHING THE GOB ONCE DOMESTIC POLITICS IN BOTH COUNTRIES PERMITTED, HOPEFULLY CONVINCING THE GOB TO RESTART CORRIDOR TALKS AGAIN. NO ACTION IS LIKELY BEFORE THE BOLIVIAN ELECTION. AS REPORTED (REFTEL B), AT LEAST ONE BOLIVIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MAY HAVE SIMILAR IDEAS.

-- THE RECENT (MARCH 27-31) MEETING BETWEEN CHILEAN AND PERUVIAN GENERALS IN SANTIAGO DID NOT TREAT POLITICAL ISSUES AND SERVED INSTEAD AS A CHANCE TO CONTINUE FRIENDSHIP TIES (HOWEVER ARTIFICIAL THEY MAY BE) BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES' ARMED FORCES. THE GROUP DISCUSSED, AMONG CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHER THINGS, THE UPCOMING AUGUST 1978 TRIPARTITE MEETING IN LIMA -- TO WHICH BOLIVIA WAS SUPPOSED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES.

3. CONTINUING THE PERU CONNECTION, THE GOC ANNOUNCED APRIL 6 THAT NUMBER TWO ARMY MAN, AND PINOCHET CONFIDANT, GENERAL CARLOS FORESTIER WOULD BE TRAVELING TO LIMA ON AN EIGHT-DAY VISIT COMMENCING APRIL 9. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, FORESTIER WILL BE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FRANCISCO MORALES BERMUDEZ AND PERUVIAN ARMED FORCES CHIEFS. ONE PURPOSE OF THE TRIP IS TO PROMOTE AN INCREASED EXCHANGE OF LOWER-LEVEL UNIFORMED PERSONNEL.

4. COMMENT: IRONICALLY CHILE'S RELATIONS WITH PERU ARE THE BEST OF THOSE WITH ITS IMMEDIATE THREE NEIGHBORS. THERE IS SOME PLAY ACTING IN THIS, BUT IT SERVES THE GOC'S INTERESTS NOW MORE THAN EVER TO MAINTAIN APPEARANCES OF INTER-MILITARY GOODWILL. BOLIVIA IS VIEWED HERE PRIMARILY AS A DIPLOMATIC RATHER THAN A SECURITY PROBLEM. THE GOC IS WILLING TO RESUME BORDER TALKS WHENEVER THE BOLIVIANS ARE READY, BUT MAY WELL INSIST ON RENEWED RELATIONS FIRST AND, AS BEST WE CAN

JUDGE, IS NOT GOING TO FOREGO THE TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE REQUIREMENT FOR CEDING A CORRIDOR. AT HEART, THE GOC PROBABLY DOUBTS THAT A BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR WILL EVER GET PAST THE PERUVIANS -- WITH OR WITHOUT THE TERRITORIAL EXHCANGE RQUIREMENT. THIS, OF COURSE, COULD BE VIEWED AS A GOOD REASON FOR THE GOC TO DROP IT. THE IMMEDIATE DANGER IS ARGENTINA. THE GOC HELD THE LINE ON WITHDRAW-ING MILITARY PERSONNEL FROM THE DISPUTED ISLANDS IN PART BECAUSE THEY WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT ANY ARGENTINE TAKE-OVER ATTEMPT SPILLS SOME CHILEAN BLOOD. AS OF NOW, GOC OFFICIALS SEE NO PROSPECT OF A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANTIA02650
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780156-1050
Format: TEL
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780470/aaaachfu.tel
Line Count: 127
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 59ae61b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BUENOS AIRES 2631, 78 SANTIAGO 2566
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3008382
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHILE'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS
TAGS: PORG, PEPR, PBOR, AR, BL, PE, CI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/59ae61b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014